

Importance of Deep Draft Navigation

Ports are the gateways through which international waterborne trade passes before reaching homes and businesses in America and other nations. International trade is a major component of this nation's economy. Port conditions (channel width and depth, cargo handling capability, etc.) determine how efficiently international cargo is handled and how quickly that cargo reaches its final destination. International trade flows into and out of the United States by land routes from Canada and Mexico, by air from around the world and by water from the maritime nations of the world. Excluding international trade with Canada and Mexico, approximately 95% of U.S. imports and exports are moved through our ports.

A reliable, safe and efficient port system contributes to national security by promoting economic growth and economic freedom beyond America's shores through international trade. Market economies support prosperity and reduce poverty, thereby encouraging economic freedom. The U.S. port system has enabled the Nation to be one of the world's leading market places. Our port system is a critical link in our Nation's transportation network and is vital for maintaining our economic status. U.S. ports and harbors handle nearly 2.5 billion tons of domestic and foreign cargo, which in turn supports more than 13 million jobs nationwide.

Congress recognized the importance of our national water navigation system early in our country's history. In 1824 the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers was designated the Federal agency responsible for our Nation's navigation system. Since then, the Corps has played a vital role in the development and growth of our economy by constructing and maintaining deep draft channels (greater than 14 feet) at U.S. ports and harbors. The Corps navigation mission today is to provide safe, reliable and efficient navigation channels, harbors and waterways for the movement of commerce, national security and recreation. The Corps accomplishes this through a combination of harbor channel deepening or other harbor improvements and sustaining the operations and maintenance of existing harbor projects. More than 90% of U.S. maritime trade passes through the more than 300 deep draft navigation projects the Corps maintains nationwide. U.S. ports and harbors annually handle nearly 2.5 billion tons of domestic and foreign cargo, which in turn supports more than 13 million jobs nationwide.

Ports will face many challenges in the future including identifying beneficial uses for dredged material, increased cargo volumes and larger vessels. The Corps will continue to work as a partner with ports and local communities to leverage resources to solve the nation's water resources problems.

For additional information visit:

<http://www.iwr.usace.army.mil/iwr/navigation/haintro.htm>